

**Public Scoping Notice
Fire Management Plan
Capitol Reef National Park, Utah
September 2003**

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a comprehensive Fire Management Plan (FMP) for Capitol Reef National Park. On June 5, 2003, two new fire management categorical exclusions were published in the Federal Register (Vol 68, No. 108, pages 33814-33824) to assist federal agencies in developing their FMPs. The NPS has determined that in very limited instances, parks undertaking suppression and fuels reduction activities that meet the published guidelines may develop a FMP using Categorical Exclusions rather than preparing an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Capitol Reef National Park meets those specified guidelines. As part of the development of a FMP, the park will evaluate potential impacts from proposed fire management activities in Capitol Reef National Park to the natural and cultural environment as well as to adjacent properties. Capitol Reef National Park is soliciting comments from the public to help identify issues and develop a fire management strategy.

You are invited to provide your comments and become part of this planning effort. For your convenience, a comment form is attached to this scoping notice.

**Please return your comments by October 15, 2004 to:
Capitol Reef National Park
Fire Management Plan Comments
H.C. 70 Box 15
Torrey, UT 84775**

Why does Capitol Reef need to plan and manage for fire?

The purpose of fire management at Capitol Reef National Park is to protect and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the park for the enjoyment of present and future generations. This includes perpetuation of the ecosystem in which these resources occur. The desired conditions for park resources include the re-establishment of the natural fire regime in appropriate areas and protection of cultural resources that could be affected by fire. Fire management is a tool used to maintain and/or restore ecological integrity. Wildland fire management is also intended to protect human life and property, both public and private.

Historically, fire has not been an important component in the landscape in and around

Capitol Reef National Park. Prior to human settlement, vegetation in the majority of the park

was largely as we see it now. The vast majority of the park does not contain large enough or dense enough patches of vegetation to sustain a fire. The few fires that historically occurred in the park were in remote locations and typically consisted of individual trees widely separated from other vegetation. Several relatively small areas of dense pinyon-juniper dominated vegetation within the park could sustain a fire and are contiguous with similar but larger areas on lands managed by other federal agencies. These areas contain trees that are many hundreds of years old, reflecting the lack of fire impacts for centuries. These contiguous patches along the park boundary do have the potential to act as a conduit for fires to exit or enter the park. Capitol Reef is developing this Fire Management Plan to facilitate coordination with the adjacent land managing agencies and their fire management strategies.

The NPS directs each park with vegetation capable of burning to prepare a Fire Management Plan to guide a program that responds to the park's natural and cultural resource objectives. The plan will emphasize safety considerations for park visitors, employees, neighbors, and developed facilities. It will address potential impact to public and private property adjacent to the park. Under new NPS policies developed over the last several years, additional resources and options are available to implement a fire management program. Priorities within the new policy focus first on the protection of human life. The second priority focuses equally on the protection of resource values and property. This new policy provides direction for park managers to use fire as a tool in maintaining natural processes and vegetation community structure.

Have preliminary issues and strategies been identified?

Capitol Reef National Park has identified preliminary issues related to fire management that will be discussed in the plan. We have not yet identified a specific fire management strategy. Issues identified through public scoping will be added to the following and addressed in the plan.

Current issues identifieds include:

- methods to execute a fire management program that provide a safe environment for firefighters and the public.
- methods to restore native vegetation and maintain park ecosystems and processes.
- effects on air quality.
- Fire management effects on wilderness resources and values.
- methods to reduce the risk of fire and fire suppression activities to cultural resources (i.e. historic structures, archeological sites).
- methods to control exotic vegetation, which causes long-term degradation of historic features.

- the best fire and fuel management techniques available for specific areas in the park (i.e., suppression, prescribed fire, natural ignition, mechanical fuel reduction).
- ways to mitigate the effects of smoke from wildland and prescribed fires on local communities and park visitors.
- strategies to minimize impacts and provide benefits from wildland and prescribed fire to the park natural and cultural resources.
- a plan that is consistent with the guiding principles of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy.

What's next?

Once we have received and reviewed the scoping comments, we will begin to develop the fire management strategy. We will be working closely with fire management officials from the NPS and adjacent land managers to develop this strategy. The next step will be writing the Fire Management Plan, which should be available for review early this winter. Those individuals that request it will have an opportunity to review a draft of the Fire Management Plan including scoping comments we receive.

If you wish to remain on the mailing list and/or review the draft of the Fire Management Plan, please check the box on the comment form, print your name and mailing address, and return to the address listed above. These materials including comment forms are also available on-line at www.nps.gov/care/pphtml/documents.html

Thank you for your interest in Capitol Reef National Park and your participation in the development of the Fire Management Plan. If you have questions, please contact Superintendent, Capitol Reef National Park, HC 70 Box 15, Torrey, UT 84775 or CARE_fireplan@nps.gov.

**Scoping Comment Form
Capitol Reef National Park, Utah
Fire Management Plan**

Please respond to the following questions and **return this form by October 15, 2004**. You may attach additional pages if needed. Also, include your name and mailing address in the space provided below. Thank you for your interest in Capitol Reef National Park.

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Do you have information, concerns, or other comments about the proposal to use a categorical exclusion for the implementation of the fire management program?

What issues would you like to see addressed?

What fire management strategies would you like to see addressed?

Do you have additional information, concerns, or other comments about the proposal?

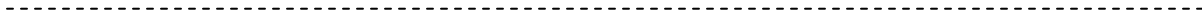
Please check the box if you would like to remain on the mailing list to receive additional information concerning this proposal.

Name: _____

Street/Box #: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

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Place
1st Class
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Here

Capitol Reef National Park
Fire Management Plan Comments
H.C. 70 Box 15
Torrey, UT 84775



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